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## **Libya Can't Take Another Tyrant**

Tripoli's Government of National Accord needs help to stop Khalifa Haftar in his attempted takeover.

*By Fayez Serraj* May 9, 2019 6:59 p.m. ET

Since toppling Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, Libya has struggled to achieve peace but has made meaningful gains under the internationally recognized Government of National Accord. In partnership with the United Nations, the GNA had been working toward national elections. But now, instead of ushering in a new democratic government, the GNA is fighting an aspiring military dictator—Khalifa Haftar—whose rival government is taking money and arms from foreign actors pursuing narrow self-interest at Libya's expense.

Before Mr. Haftar attacked Tripoli in April, the GNA was pursuing economic reforms and building on Libya's increased oil production to create opportunities and prosperity. For the past month the GNA has poured resources into defending Tripoli's civilians from a man whose forces the International Criminal Court has accused of war crimes, including mutilation and torture. Hundreds of Libyans have been killed. More than 40,000 have been displaced from their homes, and hundreds of thousands could flee for Europe.

Mr. Haftar's so-called Libyan National Army is neither entirely Libyan nor an army. Analysts say the LNA's ranks include Chadians and Sudanese—though Mr. Haftar denies this. He has saddled Libyans with billions of dollars in debt to fund attacks. His son, meanwhile, allegedly robbed hundreds of millions of dollars in cash and silver from a branch of Libya's Central Bank in the central district of Benghazi in 2017, according to the U.N. Security Council. This behavior received no public condemnation from his father.

There's no doubt that Libya under Mr. Haftar would be far from free. He has said publicly that Libya isn't "ready" for democracy and timed his Tripoli attack to derail the U.N.-sponsored National Congress that was to be the precursor to national elections.

Many of our U.N. allies have demanded a de-escalation of the conflict and an immediate cease-fire. Yet other countries are using Libya as a proxy battleground for geopolitical influence, making Mr. Haftar's war possible by providing his forces with money, training, and military equipment.

Mr. Haftar's campaign has potentially larger consequences. The violent chaos in my country will be exploited by ISIS and other terror groups. The GNA, in close cooperation with the U.S., had nearly eliminated that threat in Libya. But since April, the GNA has had to divert forces that were fighting the remnants of ISIS to combat Mr. Haftar. And the fighting makes it impossible for normal civic life to function. When children cannot attend school and men cannot work, the threat of radicalization increases. Mr. Haftar is known to have radical Salafists operating among his combatants.

To prevent a bloody civil war with global implications, Libya needs the U.S. to help stop other countries from meddling in our affairs. I remain hopeful that President Trump will succeed where previous

presidents have failed, and that he will use his power to create peace, stability, and security in Libya and the wider region.

The world has long looked to America as an example of what democracy can bring: liberty, peace and prosperity. Libya is ready for democracy. Libyans won't accept another Gadhafi-style military dictatorship.

*Mr. Serraj is prime minister of Libya.*

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**Statement from the Libyan Ministry Of Foreign Affairs issued May 9:**

"Khalifa Haftar's militias and his foreign state backers have been found to be violating the United Nations' arms embargo and are implicated in war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

We welcome the U.S. move yesterday to call for one of Haftar's top lieutenants, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, to be handed to the ICC. The unlawful measures which Haftar and his backers are willing to take to extend the life of his battle, which he has labeled a "jihad", must be met with severe consequences by the international community.

GNA forces continue to drive back Haftar's militias, yet his unprovoked aggressions targeting Libya's civilian population are destabilizing our country and laying the groundwork for the resurgence of terror groups including ISIS."

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### THE CRISIS IN LIBYA: HAFTAR CALLS FOR JIHAD

#### The Government of National Accord (GNA) is the officially recognized government of Libya

- The agreement was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council which recognized the Government of National Accord as the sole legitimate government of Libya.
- The Government of National Accord NA has 17 ministers and is led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj.
- The GNA successfully defeated ISIS. GNA forces worked closely with the US to eliminate the ISIS threat in the West of the country
- Marine Corps gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, the Commander of US Africa Command has stated that Libya is one of only two countries on the continent where we can conduct kinetic operations

#### The Libyan National Army (LNA) is waging war against the officially recognized Government of Libya General Khalifa Haftar's international supporters are backing a war criminal who has called for Jihad; he has overplayed his hand and cannot achieve victory in Libya.

- Haftar called for jihad on May 7, 2019.
- Haftar's forces are overstretched and continue to lose the initial momentum generated as a result of their surprise attack on Tripoli. They are being driven back and have lost many of the gains made over recent months.
- Haftar has been accused of war crimes by the ICC and his international backers are opening themselves up to legal jeopardy.
- The self-styled Libyan National Army are neither Libyan nor an Army. It has a large contingent of foreign fighters from neighbouring Sudan and Chad.
- Haftar is a U.S. citizen committing war crimes in Libya with foreign fighters and foreign firepower. The international community is duty-bound to support the GNA in stopping him.
- Haftar -- with forces equipped and trained by the Russians, and with military and financial support from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt -- has ignored impassioned pleas by the UN to cease his deadly onslaught against Libyan civilians.
- If Haftar takes power, Russia's influence in the region will be expanded significantly. He has already agreed to allow them to build airbases.
- Haftar has stated that Libya is not ready for democracy. This is an untrue and dangerous.
- Haftar is trying to sabotage new elections: in November he agreed that national elections were necessary but is moving in on Tripoli now because UN-sponsored talks were due to start this month to set a timeframe for those elections.
- Haftar has already saddled the country with over \$25bn worth of debt to finance his personal war.
- Even Haftar's former commander and spokesman labelled him a "tyrant" and as being "the main cause of the crisis that is crippling the country."

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- Diplomatic sources have revealed that Haftar's patrons in the Gulf prefer not to give money directly to him, out of concern that it will end up used for the wrong purposes. Even his own backers know he's an unsafe bet.

We do not want another Syria.

- Haftar is creating chaos that will be exploited by ISIS and other terror groups which the GNA had successfully defeated. Far from a partner in the fight against terror, Haftar will enable its spread and is known to have radical Salafists operating under him.
- Haftar's siege forced US troops to withdraw from Libya, ending their cooperation with local militias in the fight against ISIS.
- Haftar's actions are creating instability for global oil prices. The escalating conflict is already causing Libya's exports to drop, which has global pocketbook impact. Oil prices have risen to above \$70/barrel and could go up to \$80. When Americans go to the pump, they're paying more because of Haftar's actions.
- If Tripoli is destabilized, there is a real risk that migrants - including those who are known to be radical - will flow to Europe unimpeded.

The only option for stability in Libya is the internationally recognised GNA who are genuinely committed to democracy, security and long-term stability.

- There can be no stability in Libya without national reconciliation and democracy. The GNA intends to: work toward national reconciliation, achieve an agreement regarding power sharing, establish a timeline for elections, and deliver a democratically-elected government that is representative and diverse.
- The GNA successfully defeated ISIS. GNA forces worked closely with the US to eliminate the ISIS threat in the West of the country. Haftar was not able to beat them in the East. He has a track record of failure, rather than success, against terrorists.
- The recent stability made it possible for the GNA to facilitate long-sought surge in oil output, which benefits oil consumers around the world through its impact on global prices and also delivers much-needed revenue to the Libyan people.
- The GNA has been a consistent and genuine partner with the UN in their efforts to find a political solution that can satisfy all sides in Libya and bring peace and stability to the country.
- Prime Minister al-Sarraj comes from a family with a widely respected record of public service. Mostafa, his father, was a founding father of the state after independence in 1951.
- Prime Minister al-Sarraj supports human rights; He has called on the Libyan Army forces under his command to adhere to International Humanitarian Law as they fight Haftar forces.